



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 27, 2019

President Barack Obama
Office of Barack and Michelle Obama
P.O. Box 91000
Washington, D.C., 20066

Dear Mr. President,

I am grateful for the commitment you and the National Democratic Redistricting Committee have made in developing a comprehensive redistricting strategy with the aim of creating fair electoral maps. I am in complete agreement with your goal of rebuilding a democracy where voters pick their elected representatives—not the other way around.

Free and fair elections are the very foundation of American democracy and the most basic promise that those in power can pledge to citizens. Here in Maryland, nonpartisan redistricting reform has been overdue for decades. The current process lacks transparency, deprives Maryland citizens of their constitutional rights according to a recent court decision and has saddled our state with the unfortunate distinction of being home to the most gerrymandered districts in the nation.

Of course, Maryland is not the only offender and no political party has a monopoly on the practice of partisan gerrymandering. There are states all across the country, regardless of which party has the majority that have the same type of shameful gerrymandering.

Since taking office, my administration has been actively working to eliminate gerrymandering and restore fairness in our electoral system. During my first year as governor, we established the nonpartisan Maryland Redistricting Reform Commission, whose members traveled the state to hear what Marylanders wanted. After months of work and public input, the Commission recommended that the state establish an independent commission to draw congressional and legislative districts, eliminating the influence of elected officials and political parties.

As a result of these recommendations, over the past four sessions of the Maryland General Assembly, I have introduced comprehensive redistricting reform legislation in an effort to remove partisan politics from the redistricting process and we have so done again this year. This legislation would create a nonpartisan redistricting commission that will result in fair, open, and transparent process for all legislative and congressional districts prior to the 2022 elections.

I applaud you, Attorney General Holder, and the National Democratic Redistricting Committee for advocating ballot measures in Colorado, Utah, Michigan, and Missouri to establish nonpartisan redistricting commissions.

I write today to request that you put the same emphasis on efforts here in Maryland. It is my hope that we can join the ongoing list of states establishing nonpartisan redistricting commissions to ensure fair elections. With your support, I believe we can set things right in Maryland. As you said in your final State of the Union Address: "We have to end the practice of drawing our congressional districts so that politicians can pick their voters, and not the other way around. Let a bipartisan group do it."

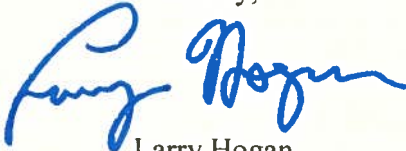
This past November, I established a nonpartisan commission to redraw Maryland's 6th Congressional District in response to a federal ruling that found the current boundary lines unconstitutional. This nonpartisan commission is charged with preparing a plan in an open, public and transparent manner to amend the district boundaries to address all constitutional violations. The commission will release a draft map on March 4 ahead of a public comment period.

Ultimately, the commission will have a map to be voted on by the Maryland General Assembly in the closing weeks of this legislative session, which concludes on April 9. Your encouragement to members of the General Assembly could go a long way toward ensuring that we adopt a new 6th District map that was created through a transparent and fair process.

The fight for fairness and bipartisanship in our state is not just a fight between the right and left; this is a fight between right and wrong. With your leadership we can encourage fairness, checks and balances, and compromise. Our collaboration on this critical shared priority would be a national model of an alternative to the divisive partisan politics that are sadly all too typical in today's polarized political climate.

I look forward to any action you would be willing to take and I offer my sincere thanks for your attention to this matter at the national level. With the weight of your support in Maryland, I know we can deliver real change for Marylanders and all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Hogan", is written over the printed name.

Larry Hogan
Governor